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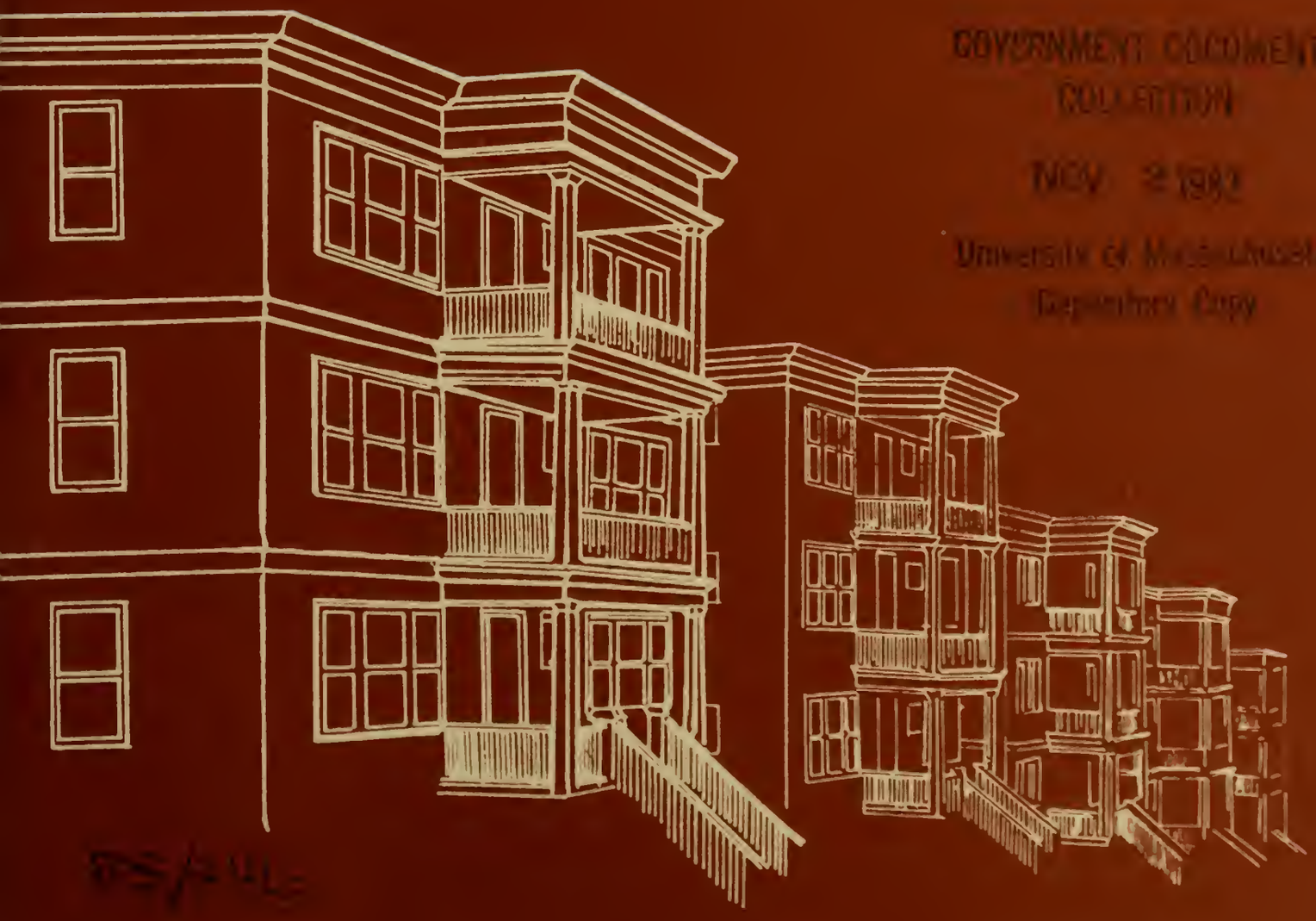
Children & the Family

Report of the Governor's Advisory Committee
Edward J. King, Governor 1980



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EDWARD J. KING
GOVERNOR

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
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Families are the vital foundation of all social structure. No neighborhood or community can thrive without nurturing the love and commitment within families, and between one family and another. No government can effectively respond to social problems without recognizing that strong families provide the most enduring human resource for all individuals, young or old.

Yet we live in a time when powerful stresses of modern society divide families and contribute to an ever increasing rate of family disintegration. Because I firmly believe that this family disruption is a root cause of violent crime, racism and other forms of human suffering, I called together early in my administration a group of nationally prominent experts on the family to work with me in finding ways to strengthen family life in Massachusetts.

It has been my privilege to work closely with this group over the last year. I accept the first report of the Advisory Committee on Children and the Family with many thanks, and the hope that this impressive effort will be a stimulus for constructive change not only in Massachusetts, but throughout the country.

Edward J. King

EDWARD J. KING

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HIGHLIGHTS

Governor Edward J. King charged the Advisory Committee on Children and the Family with two basic tasks:

- to ascertain the impact of rapid social change on Massachusetts families; and

- to determine appropriate steps government can take to strengthen and support families.

For this first report to the Governor, the Committee focused on existing public policies and their impact on the quality of family life in the Commonwealth.

Findings: Changing Families in Massachusetts

Massachusetts families in 1980 differ in important respects from Massachusetts families of just 20 years ago. The total state population and the total number of families have remained essentially stable since 1960, yet:

- The number of divorces has tripled. More than one out of three Massachusetts' marriages now ends in divorce.
- The number of single parent families jumped to 265,000 by 1976, an increase of 43%.
- 53% of all Massachusetts women work outside the home. In 1960 this figure stood at 38%. The largest influx into the labor force has been women with children under six.
- Recorded incidents of family violence stand at an all time high. The Department of Social Services anticipates handling 25,000 reports of child abuse and neglect in 1981.
- The number of live births to Massachusetts residents has decreased 40% since 1960. At the same time the number of births to unwed parents has increased 92%.

Taken together, these trends suggest significant changes in the structure and quality of family life in Massachusetts—challenging public policy toward children and families in a number of crucial areas.

Recommendations:

The recommendations in the present report are not designed to create family policy in Massachusetts by promoting more government. To affirm the life of families, we believe government first must be certain that existing policies do not stand in the way of family integrity, and second, must operate government programs so that they support the strength of families in the community rather than substitute for the family in the life of the individual. Twenty-two recommendations in eight general areas were developed based on this general principle, including recommendations for:

- the collection and dissemination of accurate information by, for and about families (page 13)
- a program of public education and awareness as to the importance of stable families to all citizens (page 15)
- the development, in co-operation with private business and labor, of model personnel practices in the workplace supportive of family life (page 16)
- comprehensive changes in public and private health care services (including mental health services) designed to focus on making the system truly open to all families, and on primary prevention as a cornerstone of family integrity (page 17)
- the statewide implementation of family life education in the public schools (page 19)
- review and modification of Massachusetts Probate and Family Court procedures in divorce, family violence, child custody procedures (page 21)
- the development of more home-based and family oriented programs for elder citizens (page 23)
- in Human Services, continued emphasis on community response to family violence (page 24) as well as modifications in selected public social service programs designed to promote stronger families (page 29)

INTRODUCTION

Human families constitute the vital cells of the body we call society. They determine our well-being and our destiny as individuals and as a community. The strength of families determines the health of the Commonwealth. The disruption of families not only imposes a vast economic burden on the state but inflicts on individuals more sorrow and suffering than war, poverty and inflation combined.

No human interaction has greater impact on our lives than our early family experience. Out of this experience come our feelings and attitudes towards ourselves and others, our view of the world around us as friendly or hostile, the emotional support necessary to sustain us throughout life and our knowledge of those fundamental rules of human conduct known as morality. Yet for several years now we have been warned by social scientists that the family is disintegrating and will not survive this century.

If any one factor influences the character development and emotional stability of an individual, it is the quality of the relationship he experiences as a child with both parents. Conversely, if people suffering from severe emotional illness have one experience in common, it is the absence of a parent through death, divorce, time-demanding job or absence for other reasons. Research from throughout the world has presented convincing evidence that a child's emotional development rests heavily on a close, warm, sustained and continuous relationship with both parents. Yet many trends in our society make this difficult to attain:

- The accelerating divorce rate in the United States subjects an ever increasing number of children to physically and emotionally absent parents. The divorce rate has risen 700% in this century and continues to soar. One divorce now occurs for every two marriages and well over a million children a year are involved in divorce cases; 13 million children under 18 have one or both parents missing.[1,2,3,4]
- The tendency to move frequently imposes stress on families. 40 million Americans move each year and according to a recent census, 50% of the population had lived at a different address five years earlier.[5] We have only begun to understand the enormous psychological uprooting that a move can have on the family. A parent's job or lack of job frequently necessitates the move. The job may also make it necessary for the parent to travel long distances and to be absent from home for many days or for weeks at a time.

INTRODUCTION

• The increasing numbers of married women who have joined the labor force and work outside of the home—especially mothers with young children—have a profound effect on family life. In 1948, 18% of the nation's mothers worked outside of the home. Today the total is over 50%. Nearly six million preschool children in the United States have working mothers.[2,6]

• The obtrusion of the television set into the American home affects the family. Excessive television viewing results from and causes parental inaccessibility. When parents are home physically, television often interferes with meaningful interaction between members of the family, making them less accessible to one another.[7]

• The lack of impulse control prevalent in our culture today has a strong bearing on family life:

• Inability to control aggression outside the home generates the steady rise of violent crime in this country.[2] In Boston, a murder occurs about every fourth day.[8] Within the home, violence appears to increase steadily. The number of "battered-child" cases is but one reflection of this increase. Authorities expect between two to four million cases to be reported in the United States this year and about 15% of these will suffer permanent brain damage; about 2,000 will die. Evidence exists that considerably more cases go unreported.[9,10,11]

• The inability to control sexual impulses is even more prevalent: more than a quarter of a million illegitimate births occur in the United States each year; teen-age pregnancies have increased 33% in the past five years. The age group between 12 and 19 now accounts for 21% of all births in the United States, and more than half of these young parents are unmarried.[12,13]

• The tendency of parents to spend less and less time with their children and to relegate child care to other agencies affects families. Cross cultural studies (many conducted by Professor Urie Bronfenbrenner, a member of our Committee) show that United States parents spend considerably less time with their children than almost any other nation in the world.[2,14] A home in which both parents are available to the child emotionally as well as physically has become in some areas of our society the exception rather than the rule. A study conducted in a Boston suburb showed that the average time per day that fathers spent with their infant children was about 37 seconds.[15]

A child experiences an absent or an emotionally inaccessible parent as rejection and rejection inevitably breeds resentment and hostility. The child may express this outwardly in the form of violence or inwardly in the form of self injury. The suicide rate in 10 to 14 year olds in the United States has doubled and in children 15 to 19 has tripled during the past 20 years.[16] These trends have resulted in our society producing an enormous number of angry, depressed and suicidal children.

If we ignore these trends, we can expect that family life will continue to deteriorate, producing a society with a higher incidence of mental illness than ever before known. We can expect all crimes of violence to increase, even those within the family. Because battered children—if they survive—tend to become parents who in turn abuse their children, the amount of violence within the family will increase exponentially. Aggression turned inward will also increase with continued acceleration of the suicide rate.

Because these national trends parallel trends within the Commonwealth and because we think these trends can be reversed, we strongly support the Governor's deep concern for the family and the unprecedented commitment as Governor to use the full influence of his office to strengthen the families of Massschusetts. We appreciate his active participation and unwavering support in our Committee deliberations.

We strongly adhere to the fundamental principle that government must never intrude into the private affairs of the family. Yet the historical tendency of our government to focus on individual rights and on services to meet individual needs has led to public policy that often ignores the family, that sometimes inadvertently fosters its disruption and that overlooks research demonstrating that family relationships and love within those relationships contribute most to an individual's fulfillment and happiness. **We proffer as the basis of this report that no government can ever effectively express concern for the welfare of the individual without a comprehensive, coordinated focus on the family.**

A government concerned for families has an obligation to remind us all that families constitute basic human relationships; that striving for individual status ultimately proves empty and frustrating if gained at the sacrifice of these relationships; that the integrity of these relationships rests on a unique kind of love and commitment—a love and commitment that involves stepping out of our own needs sufficiently to become aware of the needs of others and then acting to meet those needs; and that the increasing self-centeredness characterizing our society must be reversed if the family is to survive this century.

Armand M. Nicholi, II, M.D.,
Chairman
Governor's Advisory Committee
on Children and the Family

BACKGROUND[17]
Changing Families in Massachusetts

The Advisory Committee began its work recognizing that Massachusetts families in 1980 differ in important respects from Massachusetts families of just 20 years ago.* Although the total state population and the total number of families have both increased only slightly since 1960, several striking changes have occurred:

- While the number of marriages has remained essentially stable, the number of divorces has increased from 5,592 in 1960 to 16,492 in 1977—an increase of 195%.
- Women, especially women with children under 18, continue to enter the labor force in growing numbers. In 1960, 38% of all Massachusetts women 16 years of age or over worked outside the home. By 1976, this figure increased to 53%.
- The number of live births to Massachusetts residents decreased almost 40% in the period from 1960 to 1980. At the same time, the number of births to unwed parents increased 92%.
- Family violence demands our attention. Reported incidents of child abuse and neglect have increased from a total of 101 recorded by the Welfare Department in 1965 to a total of 15,687 in 1979. (New reporting laws and increased public awareness account for a substantial part of this dramatic increase.) In addition, last year a rising number of victims of interspousal violence filed formal petitions to probate courts under Chapter 209A of the 1978 Abuse Prevention Act. 98% of the petitioners were women filing against men, and 67% indicated they sustained physical injury.
- The number of families headed by single women increased from 140,301 in 1960 to 211,000 in 1976. Families headed by single men also increased, from 44,943 in 1960 to 54,000 in 1976.
- The total of Massachusetts families eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children has grown from 14,436 in 1970 to a projected 126,344 in 1980. (Some of this can be attributed to alterations in eligibility requirements during the period.) Single mothers head the vast majority of these families.

Taken together, these rapid changes suggest that in 1980 more families in Massachusetts have suffered the trauma of divorce, more have experienced family violence, more children have been born to unwed parents, and more parents and children have been physically and emotionally inaccessible to one another than at any time in the history of the Commonwealth.

*For purposes of this report, we used the Census Bureau definition of family as "two or more persons living together, related by blood, marriage or adoption."

Some Basic Principles

Governor King established the Advisory Committee on Children and the Family as an expression of his concern for families within the Commonwealth. In effect, the Governor charged the Committee with two tasks:

- to ascertain the impact of social changes threatening the integrity of Massachusetts families; and

- to determine what government can do to support and strengthen families, and to reverse trends adversely affecting them.

From the beginning, the Committee realized the complexity of the issues. However, as we began to work together, a number of unifying principles emerged as the basis for subsequent recommendations:

The strength of families resides in their capacity to function as the optimum environment for human development, providing love and support to individuals throughout the life cycle.

In short, we believe families provide the best environment for children to learn how to be whole, productive, loving human beings. Moreover, the human interactions within families, and between families in the community, constitute a potential support network for all persons, young and old. Public policy too often ignores this most powerful of all human resources.

Our concern extends to all families, recognizing cultural, ethnic, religious, and socio-economic diversity.

The goal of our Committee is to affirm and strengthen every family.

All families have in common two basic requirements for the fullest realization of human potential:

- **First, maximum "human accessibility."**
- **Second, a minimally nurturing environment with adequate housing, income, employment and educational opportunity, and health care.**

An adequate standard of living by itself can never guarantee family integrity. Fractured families occur among the affluent as well as among the poor. A vast body of research documents the crucial importance of human accessibility—parents to their children, spouses to each other, and potent community support systems to individual families. In order to grow and stay together, spouses, parents and children need time with one another, physical caring and basic, irrevocable commitment.

We determined to keep both essential requirements in mind as we looked at public policies and made our recommendations.

Government can best act to strengthen families first by reviewing existing policies to assess their impact on family life, and second by enabling families to sustain or restructure their own environments on behalf of their children and of themselves.

Whether we recognize it or not, government policies have a major impact on the lives of Massachusetts families. Our own review identified a multitude of programs in Environmental Affairs, Communities and Development, Human Services, Educational Affairs, Public Safety, Manpower Affairs, Consumer Affairs, Elder Affairs and Energy Resources all directly affecting the quality of family life. Our "family policy" thus already exists, though fragmented and largely unintentional. Even more worrisome, existing policies tend to be problem oriented and categorical—addressing the symptoms of family breakdown with programs aimed at individuals. To affirm the life of families, government first must be certain that existing policies do not stand in the way of family integrity, and second, must operate government programs so that they support the natural strength of families in the community rather than substitute for the family in the life of the individual.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following interim recommendations are based on extensive work by the Committee and its Subcommittees, staff research, and interviews with individuals from a range of government agencies. The Committee is especially grateful for the cooperation, support and many substantive suggestions of Secretary of Human Services Charles Francis Mahoney, former Secretary of Educational Affairs Charles E. Memusi Johnson, Secretary of Elder Affairs Thomas Mahoney, Director John Isaacson and his staff at the Office for Children, and Commissioner of Social Services, Dr. Mary Jane England.

Information on Families in Massachusetts

Though committed to writing a report for the Governor stressing practical, feasible recommendations rather than academic analysis, we thought it crucial to begin with the most accurate information possible on the state of families in Massachusetts. The first two recommendations reflect this conviction.

We recommend that a demographic profile of families in Massachusetts (based on data prepared as background for this report) be made available to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

We found it surprisingly difficult to compile a complete demographic profile of Massachusetts families. Part of the reason (as noted in the report of the Governor's Management Task Force) is the fragmentary nature of the state's data collection system. Another part of the reason is that most of us rarely consider the population from the point of view of families and family characteristics. Simply collecting and sharing what we know about families in Massachusetts would be a first step in an educational program helping the whole state focus on the family.

Once the content of the profile is approved, the Secretary of State's office could be consulted for help with printing and distribution.

We recommend that an appropriate mechanism jointly supported by Human Services (especially Public Health and Social Services), Manpower Affairs, Administration and Finance and possibly Transportation, be established as a central clearing-house for demographic data now collected in part by several agencies.

Again, it is not only the state's fiscal record keeping that needs modernization. An interagency mechanism for collecting demographic data would be a valuable resource for long range planning of transportation, housing, and education programs as well as social services. The cost of such a mechanism should be more than offset by potential savings realized by accurate planning. The Management Task Force should be consulted as to feasibility and cost effectiveness.

We recommend a Resource Book of special services, community support systems and recreation activities especially suited for families in Massachusetts be prepared in collaboration with the Executive Office of Communities and Development.

This Resource Book would serve two purposes:

- It would emphasize the special needs of families and important opportunities for families to do things together.
- It would promote Massachusetts as a highly desirable place for families to live and grow.

This would be a book not only for families with problems, but also a practical resource to all families. Single parent families, families without young children, and senior people as family members would be specifically included as part of the target audience.

Staff from Communities and Development and the Advisory Committee should be directed to prepare a more detailed outline of the resource book and a plan for foundation and/or corporate funding by January 1, 1981.

Affirmation of Family Life

The Committee strongly recommends the continuation of "Family Awareness Month" by the Governor as a yearly tradition.

The emphasis should be on activities initiated by communities and neighborhoods. Committee proposals for specific activities include:

A "Family Day" in places of community worship affirming that shared religious commitment helps hold a family together.

An educational media campaign promoting the importance of families in the life of the community. Use of the media for this purpose should be emphasized, and promoted throughout the year.

Appearances by Governor King and/or Committee members at community functions and on the media promoting families.

The Governor's Commission on the Status of Women and the Federated Women's Clubs of Massachusetts have already pledged support for this year. The widest possible statewide participation at the neighborhood level should be solicited.

The Committee recommends that the Governor recruit an ad hoc group of business and labor leaders (including the Secretaries of Administration and Finance and Manpower Affairs, or their designates) to consider the impact of working conditions and personnel practices on families. This group would:

- **be coordinated by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee.**
- **survey existing personnel practices of a representative sample of Massachusetts businesses and industries.**
- **develop and promote a model of personnel standards and practices supportive of family life.**

Staff support could be augmented by donations of personnel from the private businesses involved. The group should be time limited (no more than six months). The final product could be promoted by the Governor as an example of Massachusetts commit ment to families as well as business.

The Committee urges that feasible recommendations of the above study group be integrated with those of the Governor's Management Task Force, and implemented within state government as an example to the private business community.

Family Health

Serious physical or mental illness can disrupt the life of any family. Yet our concern as a Committee has been to focus not only on illness, but on promoting everyday good health as part of the foundation of family integrity. Our recommendations have been influenced by research documenting the connection between poor health care (especially for children, pregnant women and mothers) and factors such as marital stress, family violence, behaviorally troubled children, learning disabilities, and placement of children in foster care. We began with two basic convictions:

First, public and private health care services (including mental health services) should be truly accessible to all families. This means major changes in

a. the outreach attitudes of health facilities
b. education of the public as to how best to deal with the system
c. staff advocacy on behalf of families within the health care facilities

Second, if our goal is to strengthen healthy families, then public health programs should emphasize preventive services and the effective teaching of pro-health behavior. Special emphasis should be on educational programs promoting pre-natal care, and increasing awareness of the influence of environmental conditions such as certain medical agents, drugs, alcohol, and smoking on the development of infants in utero.

We recommend that state regulations regarding group health insurance be modified to provide maximum support to families, especially in "moments of vulnerability" such as catastrophic illness to one or both parents, birth of a chronically ill child, job change, divorce, separation, etc.

The accessibility of most families to adequate physical and mental health care is dependent on some form of third party health insurance (such as Blue Cross/Blue Shield or other group plans available in the work place). While health insurance plans are regulated by state law, a brief study by the Committee revealed three areas of concern relevant to families:

- With the exception of Health Maintenance Organization plans, most health insurance reimburses families only for medical costs of specific illnesses. Ordinary preventive health care (including preventive care in mental health) is not routinely supported. In addition, there is considerable variability as to the nature of basic coverage.
- In the event of separation or divorce, coverage can be routinely canceled for non-working spouses and children of individuals receiving health insurance through work. Massachusetts state regulations provide no recourse for this situation.
- When a job change also means switching group health policies, the new policy can reject any or all family members under Massachusetts law. This is a particular hardship for families with handicapped or chronically ill children.

We recommend that the cornerstone of the Department of Public Health be a comprehensive policy of child and family health services with an emphasis on prevention. A short-term action group (consisting of the Secretary of Human Services or his designate, the Commissioner of Public Health, the Director of Preventive Medicine, and the Director of Family Health Services) should be convened by the Governor to draft the specifics of such a policy, examine existing programs within the Department, and make recommendations for administrative action within the constraints of existing resources.

The goal here is not a new Department, but a continuation of already initiated movement away from a loose collection of categorical programs toward a coherent organization based on the needs and demographic characteristics of modern families. The report should be completed no later than July 1, 1981. Staff resources of E.O.H.S., the Department and the Committee can be shared in support of the group's activity.

Ideally, a family-oriented Department of Public Health would focus on expanding multi-lingual, multi-ethnic prevention programs, including:

- programs designed to teach families how to make use of preventive services already in place, and in general how to manage the complex health care system.
- the production of films and other media for public health education specifically designed for interactive use (i.e. in conjunction with "live" discussions in schools, libraries, etc.)
- a strong campaign of public health education geared to young parents and parents-to-be. Ideally, all parents of the approximately 70,000 infants born in Massachusetts each year should be specifically targeted.
- a major effort to revitalize the role of the school nurse-practitioner, and to integrate preventive services for young children and families with public schools.

We recommend that courses in family life education (based on curricula reflective of local community norms and standards, and including practical experiences of caring for others) be available in all Massachusetts public school systems. The Governor should direct the Commissioner of Education to work with the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and the Family in preparing the most expeditious plan for implementing such courses statewide.

Adequate preparation for the responsiblities of marriage, parenthood and family living has an essential place in the public school curriculum. The major objective of such courses is to enable young people to make better informed life decisions as competent adults. We believe the need for family life education is clearly underscored by the expressed desire of young people for responsible programs in this area, by trends within our society such as rising divorce rates, the escalating incidence of adolescent pregnancy, and increased awareness of child abuse. A variety of family life curricula are currently available; specific curricula need to be studied and the most appropriate adapted to the needs of each particular community.

Yet two additional issues must be acknowledged before a statewide effort to implement family life courses can be successful:

- the concern of some parents that family life education in the schools may undermine parental rights and responsibilities
- the economic feasibility of any new courses of study in a time of cutbacks in school budgets across the state

The implementation plan prepared by the Commissioner in concert with the Governor's Advisory Committee should focus on both of these issues—emphasizing strategies that maximize parent involvement in course planning and teaching, and utilizing community resources (e.g. private and public agencies, libraries, colleges, informal support systems) to the fullest. The final plan should be completed no later than December 15, 1980. By September 1, 1981 at least one pilot program should be operational within each school district in the Commonwealth.

We recommend that families and schools be closely connected to each other. Parents should have a more active voice in the public school educational program, and should be utilized as a natural resource in all manner of school activities. School system resources should, in turn, be made available for multiple family and community support services.

Of course, some school systems already have active programs for family participation, and "community schools" encourage multiple use of facilities. Yet for the most part, traditional barriers remain between families and schools. While these barriers will not be eliminated by simple mandate, we suggest two actions that can be taken as a start:

- A major theme of Family Awareness Month should be "Families and Schools in Partnership." All of the local educational authorities in the state should be contacted and encouraged to sponsor family-oriented activities in the schools. A list of suggestions should be included in the letters. In addition, outstanding examples of schools in support of families (e.g. school buildings used for family and community activities, educational programs and materials enabling adults to be more effective parents, parents participating in the classroom, parent support groups sponsored by schools, etc.) should be collected and publicly acknowledged.
- The Commisioner of Education should be asked to collaborate with members of our Subcommittee on Families and Education in a review of existing policies relating to families, family participation in schools, and community use of school resources. This review should be time limited and should serve as a basis for administrative action and possible legislation.

As one response to the accelerating rate of divorce we recommend that the Governor file legislation establishing a Special Commission to review Massachusetts Probate and Family Court procedures as they affect families. The Commission should be mandated to recommend court reforms promoting mediation and conciliation in divorce and family violence situations, and standardizing child custody procedures. The Commission should be time limited, and should include the Chief Justice of the Probate Court or another Judge designated by him, a Registrar of Probate appointed by the Chief Justice, private citizens, members of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees, an attorney in probate practice, a representative of the Massachusetts Bar Association, a social worker or other professional specializing in family counseling, and a legal scholar expert in family law.

The rationale for a formal Special Commission is two-fold:

- First, the complexities of judicial reform and probate law require careful, public deliberation.
- Second, the high visibility of a Special Commission is one way to focus attention on the problem of divorce, and on the Governor's overall program in support of families.

We believe it is crucial to advocate for Probate Court procedures designed to keep families together. Programs such as "courts of conciliation" in California and other states should be studied for possible adaptation in Massachusetts. In addition, the Special Commission should reconsider controversial issues in the area of child custody (including joint custody, separate advocates for children in divorce proceedings, and the advisability of Massachusetts becoming a signatory of the Uniform Child Custody Act already adopted by 39 other states). If the Commission is firmly time-limited, focused by the Governor, and receives the cooperation of the Legislature, the potential exists to lay the ground-work for a national model of divorce and child custody court procedure. Even if only incremental changes result, the debate should prove highly valuable.

Police and law enforcement agents deal with thousands of families in crisis each year. Police intervention is often the first line of community response to family violence and other crisis situations. We recommend that the Governor, through the Executive Office of Public Safety and/or with the Attorney General's Office, establish a Statewide Training and Consultation Program in Family Intervention available to police officers in all Massachusetts communities.

Often unacknowledged by professionals in social welfare is the front line work of police officers as on-the-spot counselors and mediators of family distress. We realize that working effectively with families in crisis requires special skill and experience and that family disturbance calls rank high among causes of police fatality. For both reasons, training in family intervention should be available to police departments in all communities, not just the few cities and towns now sponsoring such programs. Training ideally should be interdisciplinary—by and for both social workers and police officers. Funding should be solicited from the Federal government and/or from private foundations for pilot implementation of the training, based on successful models in other states.

The Committee endorses the $8.7 million expansion of home and family-based services proposed in the F.Y. '81 Budget Recommendations by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Community services for elder citizens based on the principle of least restrictive environment and emphasizing the human dignity of elders as family members should be further expanded.

Families provide emotional sustenance and other human resources for individuals of all ages. All helping programs, especially those for elder citizens, should be designed to support independent living in the home and maximum involvement of families in the delivery of service. We urge the Department of Elder Affairs to continue to develop home-based services, especially:

- the expansion of housing programs for elder citizens, including Day Centers offering continuing education and other programs aimed at reintroducing elders to the productive life of the community.
- the development of pilot child care programs involving elder citizens as qualified staff persons in conjunction with the Day Centers mentioned above.
- the expansion of sheltered workshops for elder citizens. Such programs should be developed utilizing schools or other public buildings as well as in conjunction with the Day Centers mentioned above.
- the further development of "foster care" and respite care programs for the dependent elderly as an alternative to nursing homes. These programs should stress involvement and support of the elder citizen's extended family.

Another important theme of the Family Awareness program throughout the state should be to focus on extended families, especially the place of elder family members as well as the very youngest in the specialness of family life.

True affirmation of family life is to help people see that families are made up of human relationships across generations and throughout the community.

Family violence (including child abuse and neglect) has been an area of special concern for the Committee. We believe that the tragedy of family violence is best understood as a community problem, requiring carefully integrated, community based, family supportive services. This basic conviction leads to two preliminary recommendations:

We endorse the concept of decentralized, community based social services currently being implemented. Particularly in the area of family violence, these services should be delivered with maximum cooperation between social workers, school systems, public health, and public safety officials. We urge the new Department of Social Services to establish an appropriate mechanism within each Area Board charged with planning and reviewing programs dealing with family violence. The emphasis should be on preventive intervention. Local school, public health and public safety personnel should be included as participants with Area Board members.

Long-range planning—especially for preventive intervention—requires an understanding of the phenomena of family violence specific to each community environment. Our experience as a Committee leads us to believe that we have little reliable data as to the incidence and prevalence of the problem. We therefore recommend a focused, time-limited survey research project designed to find out as much as possible about family violence in Massachusetts. This project should be jointly sponsored by the Department of Social Services and a responsible private institution.

The purpose of such a study is to provide information for practical planning. Expertise regarding study design can be provided by Advisory Committee members and staff. Funds should be solicited by grant application to public and private sources. If possible, the research project should be targeted for completion in six months from actual start-up. We recommend that the Governor ask the Secretary of Human Services and the Commissioner of Social Services to provide maximum support in planning and implementing this project.

The Committee recommends that the Governor ask the Secretary of Human Services, in collaboration with members of the Advisory Committee, to plan a state conference on "Permanent Planning and the State's Legal Responsibility as Parent." Professionals, lawyers, business and community leaders should be invited to participate. Issues such as rights of children, specialized foster care, etc. should be included. Proceedings of the conference should be collected, disseminated, and used as a basis for long-range planning.

In a general sense, the movement toward community based services and permanent planning for children is based on growing recognition that the State is not an effective parent for the 9,800 children for which it is legally responsible. We endorse the concept that all children, no matter how troubled, should have maximum possible contact with families and family life. Yet there are a number of social, economic, and legal issues raised by a commitment to this general concept. A formal conference with wide participation is one way to begin publicly raising these issues for productive resolution.

If truly effective, family-oriented, community based social services are to become a reality, the requested staffing pattern for the new Department of Social Services should be fully scheduled and funded.

We believe it would be tragic to establish one of the most innovative social service departments in the nation, only to fail to fully implement the promise with sufficient trained staff. From the point of view of families, there are two crucial elements of the requested staffing pattern:

- sufficient staff to reduce caseloads to 20 so families and individuals in need can have real access to service workers.
- sufficient staff so that a purchase of service system of over $140 million can be monitored for effectiveness and real family impact.

Both, but especially the first, are extremely important.

Current Federal eligibility guidelines for Aid for Families with Dependent Children require that all able mothers whose youngest child is older than six years work or participate in work training. The Committee recommends that the Governor request the Commissioner of Public Welfare to report on:

- **the number of school-age children in Massachusetts affected by this requirement**
- **the number, kind and quality of day child care services available to these children and their mothers**
- **feasible plans for insuring the availability and accessibility of high quality day care services, especially for AFDC mothers in training or looking for work**

This report should be submitted as soon as possible as the basis for possible new legislation and long-range planning.

The Department of Social Services is currently revising its Standards of Practice and Procedures. The Advisory Committee requests the opportunity to review this crucial document. A review process should be set up with the Commissioncr of Social Services and our Subcommittee on Families in Crisis.

The request for review is meant to stress our belief that a new Standards of Practice and Procedures is long overdue, and should receive careful study both inside and outside the Department.

We recommend that all community based human service programs, especially those in the Departments of Public Health and Mental Health, have staff available to function as "family advocates." These advocates could be existing staff persons trained as service brokers to help families cope with the human service system from the point of entry. A training program for such advocacy should be developed in conjunction with the Department of Social Services and other public helping agencies.

We believe that some families are cut off from adequate health care and other human services not because the services do not exist, but because the system itself can be unmanageable and overwhelming. Family advocates would basically be translators of the system for all families. Ideally, establishing and promoting such programs in the public sector would reinforce innovative programs already established in the private sector, and underscore the importance of family advocacy in the delivery of all effective services to people.

We recommend that the Governor direct all agency heads within the Executive Department to report on effective policies and practices supporting families in Massachusetts.

The emphasis should be on the real and potential positive impact of government in support of families. Agency staff members should be asked to submit brief reports with information provided under two headings:

- Outstanding examples of existing practices consistent with the four basic priciples of this Committee report
- Additional innovations they would like to introduce along the same line.

These reports could be reviewed by the Advisory Committee (or some other appropriate group), and forwarded to the Governor with recommendations for the recognition of outstanding existing programs, and for the implementation of feasible innovations.

A similar request for information could be made by the Governor to the private sector, through the various organizations of human service providers, business and labor leaders, etc. The Advisory Committee (or other appropriate body) could again review the information received, and report to the Governor with recommendations for recognizing and encouraging innovative approaches in support of children and families.

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Additional figures and projections concerning family violence and Aid for Families with Dependent Children were provided by the Office of Research and Evaluation, Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare at the request of the Committee.

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